

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 28, 2009

**CONTACT:** Melissa DelaCalzada  
(619) 278-6139; mdelacalzada@sdhospice.org



**New Palliative Medicine Hotline To Call San Diego Home**

*The Institute for Palliative Medicine in San Diego will operate  
California's first statewide consultative service for palliative care resources*

**(SAN DIEGO)** – Communities in California lacking palliative medicine resources will now receive top quality palliative care consultative and educational support through a new hotline operated by The Institute for Palliative Medicine in San Diego.

The Institute for Palliative Medicine received a \$1,203,547 grant from UnitedHealth Group to help develop, implement and evaluate palliative care consultative services by phone and internet. The hotline will be called the California Palliative Care Consultation Center Hotline and will serve as a pilot for a national telephone consultative service. The hotline will soon be operational and the number is (toll free) 1-888-592-2510.

Located on the campus of San Diego Hospice since its founding as the Center for Palliative Studies in 1989, The Institute for Palliative Medicine has achieved international recognition for its innovative education programs, patient/family-centered research and evidence-based advocacy. San Diego Hospice is one of the largest hospice and palliative care programs in the United States.

Palliative care is the prevention and relief of suffering by a specialized inter-disciplinary health care team that focuses on managing symptoms, relieving pain, and improving quality of life, whatever the diagnosis. The Institute for Palliative Medicine helped pioneer the palliative medicine subspecialty approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties in 2006.

“We are very excited and pleased to have been awarded this grant by UnitedHealth Group and PacifiCare,” said Helen McNeal, Executive Director of The Institute for Palliative Medicine. “With their assistance, we will be able to offer palliative care assistance and educational support by phone and across the internet to physicians, nurse practitioners and clinical pharmacists caring for seriously ill patients in communities throughout California.”

“The need for access to consultative resources in palliative medicine is great,” noted Dr. Charles von Gunten, Provost of The Institute for Palliative Medicine. “There are only 273 board-certified palliative care physicians in California and many smaller communities and rural areas don’t have any to serve their residents. As our population ages, the need will only become greater for palliative care. We want this hotline to become the lifeline that brings the relief of suffering home for all Californians.”

The award is part of more than \$6.1 million in grants to 13 California nonprofits statewide by UnitedHealth Group/PacifiCare as part of an ongoing commitment dedicated to improving health care services through enhanced health care technology opportunities, supporting clinical education and driving preventive health initiatives.

“UnitedHealth Group and PacifiCare are committed to investing in a healthier California,” said Steve Nelson, CEO, Western Region of UnitedHealthcare. “We do this by offering products and services that address access to quality health care for all Californians, and also through grants to diverse community health organizations statewide that will help improve the health care delivery system for everyone, including underserved populations.”

(more)

## **About The Institute for Palliative Medicine**

The Institute for Palliative Medicine is internationally recognized for its excellence in palliative care education and research. Located on the campus of San Diego Hospice in San Diego, CA, The Institute for Palliative Medicine has achieved international recognition for its innovative education programs, patient/family-centered research and evidence-based advocacy. Dedicated to the relief of suffering through the transformation of health care, it focuses on discovering, demonstrating and disseminating strategies for palliative care in existing health care systems whether here in San Diego or throughout the world. Physicians and healthcare professionals from around the globe come to The Institute for Palliative Medicine to study. Home to the country's largest palliative medicine physician fellowship program, the Institute also provides education to more than 1700 health care students and professionals each year.

For more information, visit online at [www.sdhospice.org](http://www.sdhospice.org)

## **About UnitedHealth Group**

UnitedHealth Group ([www.unitedhealthgroup.com](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com)) is a diversified health and well-being company dedicated to making health care work better. Headquartered in Minneapolis, Minn., UnitedHealth Group offers a broad spectrum of products and services through six operating businesses: UnitedHealthcare, Ovation, AmeriChoice, OptumHealth, Ingenix, and Prescription Solutions. Through its family of businesses, UnitedHealth Group serves more than 70 million individuals nationwide.

# # #